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AUTHOR Rolls, Judith A.
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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to show how Canadian hiring policies affect, and actually impede, the creation and maintenance of "speech" communication programs in Canada. The paper notes that when Canadians think "communication" they think media or mass communication--which makes sense since few Canadian universities teach courses in speech communication, or even know what they are. The paper first gives an overview of the Canadian perspective, then follows with an explanation of Canadian hiring policies and how they impact the establishment and development of communication departments. Finally, the paper discusses implications for speech communication departments, for example, the possibility of relocating speech communication courses to business administration programs, and concludes that the future is bleak for the development of speech communication courses and programs in Canada. (NKA)

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IMPLICATIONS OF CANADIAN HIRING POLICIES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION PROGRAMS IN CANADA

Judith A. Rolls, Ph.D.
Department of Communication
University College of Cape Breton
Sydney, N.S., CANADA B1P 6L2
902-563-1245 (Office) 902-539-7406 (Fax)
jrolls@uccb.ns.ca

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IMPLICATIONS OF CANADIAN HIRING POLICIES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION PROGRAMS IN CANADA

Judith A. Rolls, Ph.D.

The goal of this commentary is to show how Canadian hiring policies affect, and actually impede, the creation and maintenance of "speech" communication programs in Canada. When Canadians think *communication*, they typically think media or mass communication. This makes sense in that few Canadian universities teach courses in speech communication, or even know what they are. Acquisition editors from major publishing companies such as Prentice-Hall or Harcourt Brace claim that the Canadian market for public speaking texts is only 3500. This is only 500 less than the number of introductory communication students at the University of Kansas alone. And although public speaking and interpersonal communication courses may be taught at some universities and community colleges, such courses are not necessarily housed in communication departments.

To understand the impact of Canadian hiring policies on the development of speech communication programs in Canada, the work begins with a broad view of the Canadian perspective. This segment is part of a previously published article titled *Communication Pedagogy: What's Typical Across Canada and Unique at the University College of Cape Breton* [Communication Education, 1998, 47(3), 292-299]. The description is followed by an explanation of Canadian hiring policies and how they impact the establishment and development of communication departments.

The Canadian Approach

To begin, the communication discipline itself is not nearly as balanced, or as widespread, as it is in the United States. And, where strong departments do exist, (like at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, The University of Calgary in Alberta, the University of Windsor in Ontario, Carleton University in Ontario, the University of Ottawa in Ontario, or Concordia University [the only university in North America to offer a bilingual Ph.D] in Quebec), programs focus on mass communication such as telecommunications, media studies, and journalism. Speech communication courses (interpersonal communication, persuasion, oral interpretation, public speaking, rhetoric, rhetorical criticism, small group, health communication, interviewing, and so forth) are not included in most department offerings. Rowland Lorimer's (1997) editorial in a special issue of the Canadian Journal of Communication devoted to interpersonal interests provides insight into communication programs and research in Canada.

> The articles contained in this issue are unusual for the Canadian Journal of Communication. In the history of the Journal there has been little published dealing with interpersonal communication . . .
>
> Perhaps the mistaken view that interpersonal articles would not be welcome comes from the structure of many communications departments in Canadian universities. Few have strong interpersonal sections and I do not know of a case where a broad communications department has been built on a program in speech communication, a pattern of development well known in the U.S.
>
> Thinking of this building process brings to mind the lack of knowledge we have in our own history of the study of communications in Canada. (Lorimer, 1997, p.3)

Donaldson (1997), the guest editor for that special issue, writes that:

> Canadian academics studying communication are justifiably proud

> of their achievements. Grounded in the work of theorists such as Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan, scholarly discourse has contributed insight into many aspects of human endeavour. However, researchers working in the subfield of interpersonal communication are more likely to be housed in other disciplines meeting only periodically with those who have built the Canadian Communication Association or with those who have shared research interests. (Donaldson, 1997, p. 4)

It appears that Canadian communications scholars focus their research efforts on media studies and mass communication, and this is reflective of and/or reflected in the types of programs that have been developed in Canada. For instance, the University of Windsor's Department of Communication Studies is devoted to "the study, analysis, and understanding of the role of communication in contemporary culture" (University of Windsor Undergraduate Calendar 1997-1998, p. 148). The emphasis in the honours Communication Studies undergraduate degree is on "communication theory and research methods, cultural studies, communication policy and systems, and the design and application of media content " (University of Windsor Undergraduate Calendar 1997-1998, p. 148). The master's degree programs in communication studies at the University of Calgary are described in its advertisement as follows: "The programs provide specialized training in the following communications areas: organizational, theory and history, policy and regulation, marketing, information technology, and international and intercultural communications" (University of Calgary Master's Degree Programs in Communication Studies Advertisement, 1997). Carlton University's School of Journalism and Communication offers graduate programs in journalism and mass communication as well as linguistics and applied language. Courses offered in the typical Canadian communications department include political communication, communication

policy in media and information technology, advertising and social marketing, mass media/popular culture, television aesthetics, television production, communication and technology, drama, media and development, documentary film, international communication, organizational communication, culture and communication, women and the media, multimedia production, and so forth. Few, if any, speech communication courses are included.

Pockets of speech communication courses do exist across Canada, but they are often cross-listed with other disciplines, or they are housed in other departments. For example, Brock University's Communications Studies program lists interpersonal communication among its offerings but the course, titled "Psychology of Interpersonal Behavior," is cross-listed with a psychology course. One can take a variety of rhetoric courses at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, but they are listed with the English department. One difficulty in locating rhetoric courses in Canada is that they are likely to be enmeshed within writing and composition programs. And, many business and professional writing courses are also referred to as communication courses.

Finding speech communication course listings in Canada is not easy. Sometimes they are included in Speech and Drama departments like the one at Mount Saint Vincent University in Nova Scotia which offers three speech communication courses - voice and speech, introduction to public speaking, and persuasion theory and practice. The University of Waterloo has several speech communication courses but they are listed as drama courses, even though the university offers a major and minor in speech communication within the department of "Drama and Speech Communication." The communication program at the University of Ottawa, which is media, programing, production, and research oriented, also includes courses like interpersonal and

nonverbal communication, theories of organizations, or group dynamics. Overall, however, compared to American university offerings, Canadian students, in general, have little to no exposure to communication other than that provided in media, mass communication, or communication production courses.

Fiordo's (1989) exploratory study reported a small number of universities that teach introductory, basic communication courses. He polled member universities of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada regarding the number and types of basic courses taught in Canadian universities. Of the eighty-seven universities contacted, 57 responded. By my count, only 18 universities had programs in communication. Of these, only 11 boasted faculty with actual credentials in communication, and only nine of the respondents offered basic communication courses. Interestingly, Fiordo found that most basic courses (broadly defined as a course that addressed any of the following subject areas: public speaking, interpersonal communication, speech communication, speaking fundamentals, and the like) were taught by instructors outside the communication field. He concluded that:

> While at the graduate level communication in Canada may lean toward media studies and mass communication for the most part, at the basic course level communication follows an American model. A concern, that may be a problem, involves the irony of the American model for the basic courses are being taught frequently by professors without communication degrees. Frequently, people from management, educational psychology, educational administration, writing programs, marketing, and so on teach the basic course. In other words, the coverage of the basic course by professors with diverse backgrounds in and out of the field of communication allows the course to be taught.
>
> (Fiordo, 1989, p. 2)

Fiordo further found that basic courses were not necessarily a part of any communication

department. Most courses were performance-based and, overall, included topics such as public speaking fundamentals, communication demonstrations, sensitivity training, assertiveness training, communication ethics cases, grammatical exercises, dramatics practice, the study of famous speeches and essays, networking exercises, practice in upward and downward communication in organizations, videotaping of performances, and gender roles and communication.

Since Fiordo's 1989 study, more universities have instituted basic communication courses. For instance, the University of Waterloo which reported no program in 1989 now has a Drama and Speech Communication department. However, there may be only two or three Canadian communication departments, such as the University of Waterloo Department of Drama and Speech Communication and the University College of Cape Breton (UCCB), that are based on the American model. The longest running and most developed, and one housing a faculty who possesses degrees in speech communication or communication studies from American universities, is the Department of Communication at the University College of Cape Breton.

Canadian Hiring Procedure

Canadian hiring policies require academic positions to be advertised in Canada, although they can be declared simultaneously in American publications like Spectra. The advertising standard recommends that positions be announced in the two major Canadian academic publications, *University Affairs* and *CAUT Bulletin*. If time restrictions prevent meeting publication deadlines, positions have to be advertised in local and major city newspapers, and announcements forwarded to Canadian university communication departments. All communiques

and flyers include the proviso: "In accordance with Canadian requirements this advertisement is directed to Canadian citizens and permanent residents." To even be considered, the applicant must be a Canadian citizen living in Canada, a Canadian citizen living elsewhere, or a person of another nationality who has been granted Canadian landed immigrant status. The policy, known as *Canadians First*, makes sense. Enacted to provide opportunities for Canadians, it directs that foreign competitors can only be interviewed after an exhaustive search across Canada has been conducted, and hiring agencies have convinced immigration officers that none of the contestants are suitable for the position. In general, this is a sound policy that works for most disciplines. However, it is problematic when it comes to "speech" communication.

There are a number of factors influencing whether or not communication departments can demonstrate a candidate's inappropriateness for a post: the individual's communication experience and background, the degree to which university and immigration officials are familiar with the speech communication discipline, and the level for which candidates are being sought. These components, and their ramifications for the evolution of speech communication in Canada, are discussed in the next section.

Impact on Hiring

As indicated in the general review of communication programs in Canada, there are only two or three communication departments based on the American Speech Communication paradigm. Hence, it follows that few Canadians possess Ph.D's in Speech Communication - a doctoral program emphasizing interpersonal communication, persuasion, nonverbal communication, rhetoric, public address, oral interpretation, organizational communication, and

so forth. During the 1980's and early 1990's, there seemed to be little trouble securing permission to advertise in the US and to interview and hire American citizens. That was because a search for a full-time, tenure track position to teach courses like interpersonal communication, public speaking, persuasion, and organizational communication would only draw about eight applications from all over Canada. And, none would be qualified speech communication specialists; they usually represented diverse disciplines like Counselling, English, Education, Sociology and/or Religious Studies. Because it was so clear that applicants did not possess suitable educational backgrounds, nor fitting teaching experience, university administrations and local immigration officials quickly saw the inappropriateness of the candidates. Authorization to pursue a search in the US was readily granted.

Today, however, the procedure seems more complicated, and consent is not so readily bestowed. If the same type of speech communication position listed above were advertised now, we would be more apt to receive applications from Canadians who possess Ph.D.'s in communication, although not likely in the speech communication field. Rather, in keeping with departments across Canada, candidates' programs would probably focus on culture and communication, media studies, or even communication and the arts. Because candidates posses terminal degrees, and because the term communication is so broadly defined, university administrations and immigration personnel who generally lack experience with speech communication, find it difficult to understand why such candidates are unsuitable. This is particularly troublesome when candidates have actually taught an introductory public speaking course at some time during their careers. Often, officials are not convinced and require that such individuals are interviewed for speech communication jobs. Clearly, the attitudes and

knowledge levels of administrators and immigration officials greatly influence this process. If deans and administration know the esoteric nature of "speech" communication, as opposed to media studies and mass communication, they are more likely to argue on your behalf. Unfortunately, like most Canadians, they typically have little to no speech communication experience. In such cases, selection of speech communication faculty will have to come from outside the discipline.

Related too to the interdisciplinary nature of the communication discipline, and to the wide use of the title *communication* to denote diverse departments, is the role that fear, compounded with ignorance, plays in the hiring process. For instance, if speech professors are sought in areas of high unemployment, immigration officers are careful to interpret policy to the letter of the law. The prospect of having the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) or some other network take on a story of a foreigner getting hired for a job a local could do, is not pleasant. Too, I know of cases where Canadian candidates (hometown individuals living elsewhere in Canada and who possed a Ph.D. in "Communication") were actually interviewed for positions for which they were not remotely qualified. This was done merely to curtail and dispel possible negative responses and repercussions from community members who would not understand why a "hometown" person with a Ph.D. was not given an opportunity to interview for the job. Such procedures are unfair to all parties.

The level of the advertised position also impacts on the hiring process. For example, immigration officials are less likely to give permission to hire in the US if the appointment is for entry-level courses, particularly if the posting is a limited term position. This too can influence the development of undergraduate programs.

Implications for Speech Communication Departments

I started this paper by saying that its goal was to demonstrate how Canadian hiring policies affect, and actually impede, the creation and maintenance of "speech" communication programs in Canada. I see this happening in a number of ways. As a result of the hiring policies, more and more faculty for speech courses will have to be selected from media and mass communication departments, especially if such individuals have had any training or experience what so ever in basic communication courses. Clearly this has ramifications for later departmental development. Given these faculty members' interests and background, they inevitably will introduce mass communication, media, and culture and communication into programs and departments. Such integration of topics will further fragment the already disperse nature of communication in Canada and prevent the continued development of strong undergraduate and graduate programs in speech communication.

Overall, I see the picture as a bleak one. Canadian students wishing to pursue graduate degrees in speech communication must study in the US. This too is becoming prohibitive with the declining Canadian dollar. I see losing some of our best students to mass communication, media, and communication and culture departments in Canadian universities. When they are qualified, they may be hired, but their training will be reflected in future program development, further diminishing the role of speech communication courses in Canada. One option for the continuation for "speech" communication courses may be to relocate in business administration programs. Most communication courses are readily embraced by management and business personnel who have a clear understanding of, and appreciation for, the pragmatics of communication and readily encourage students to take electives in speech communication.

In conclusion, I do not think there is much of a future for the development of speech communication courses and programs in Canada. In fact, we will see a decline, given the present hiring practices. However, the picture may not have to be so bleak if professors of speech communication take a more active role in educating our faculties, administrators, and our communities about the distinct nature of speech communication. They know what mass communication is. They know about media. But many do not have a clue that there are actually university courses that cover topics like interpersonal communication, gender and communication, rhetoric, small group interaction, argumentation and debate, and so forth. It is high time we they were informed.

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